Reviewer’s report

Title: The Rheumatoid Arthritis Treat-To-Target Trial: A Cluster Randomized Trial Within the CORRONA Rheumatology Network

Version: 1 Date: 8 October 2013

Reviewer: Raimon Sanmarti

Reviewer’s report:

The design of the study is interesting and in general the methodology seems to me correct. However I have some concerns

1. Background: the authors comment the TICORA trial as the first trial investigating this interesting topic, however there are other studies confirming the results of the TICORA trial that are not mentioned (Schipper LG et al Ann Rheum Dis 2012 and others) whereas the Best study is not an study focusing on this objective.

2. Method/design: Why the authors decided to use CDAI rather than SDAI or DAS28? In my opinion the main outcome (CDAI < 10 at month 12) is quite punctual, perhaps the maintenance or a CDAI < 10 in several visits (from 9 to 12 months or in two consecutive visits) may be more informative. Patient recruitment: there is no mention of the disease duration or previous use of DMARDs or biologics as a selection criteria or an adjusted analysis for these and other variables. This may be problematic in order to assure that the baseline characteristics of both populations are similar.

3. Discussion: As the authors comment there are one important limitation of the study such us the investigator discretion regarding treatment decision. I agree with this but is difficult to improve the design of the study to solve this problem. However there is other limitation such as the site randomization. I don’t know if there are previous studies analysing the differences in the usual care inside the centres participating in the CORRONA registry. This information would be interesting.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

'I declare that I have no competing interests'